(c) whether the road so constructed is going to reduce time taken for the Mansarover Yatra?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) Border Roads Organizations (BRO) has submitted a proposal for acquisition of 183.3 Hectares of land to Uttarakhand Government for proposed work.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Yes, Sir.

Increase in cases of suicide and premature retirement in army

1719. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the suicide toll/pre-mature retirement in the Indian Army is increasing day-by-day, as since 2002, more than 450 soldiers have killed themselves and 811 officers sought premature retirement during 2006;

(b) if so, what is the number thereof till the middle of 2007 as per Army records; and

(c) what remedial steps Government propose to take in this regard to solve an array of problems: suicides, fragging, deteriorating mental health, etc. being faced by the world's third largest army and the most battle-hardened forces of the country?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (c) The details of suicide and premature retirement cases in the Army for the last five years are as follows:

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007 (till 15.8.2007)
Suicide cases	80	100	100	77	120	70
Premature Retirement Cases	65	329	278	336	435	371

The Government has taken a series of measures to check incidents of suicide, fratricide, etc. in the Army. Some of these steps are:–

(i) Better man management and prompt attendance of grievances at Unit level.

(ii) Improved accessibility of leaders and frequent interaction of junior leaders with the soldiers.

(iii) Some Junior Commissioned Officers of Army Medical Corps (AMC) have been trained and deployed as psychological counsellors in Northern and Eastern Commands.

(iv) Training of more JCOs and NCOs for acting as counsellors in units.

(v) The NCOs have been educated and sensitised to be alive to the sensibility of the troops.

(vi) Visits by senior staff officers apart from formation commanders to units to assess conditions of employment and living.

(vii) The training capsules on relaxation techniques including Yoga and Pranayam have been introduced.

(viii) Leave policy has been liberalised permitting splitting of annual and casual leave. The troops will now be able to go to their home towns on leave thrice a year instead of twice a year earlier.

(ix) Rotation of units and individuals to minimize exposure to stress.

(x) All Chief Ministers have been requested to make the civil administration more responsive to the problems of serving soldiers and their families.

(xi) A helpline with toll free number has been established.

(xii) Efforts are made for identification and counselling of persons who are at higher combat stress by Regimental Medical Officers, junior leaders and unit commanders.

(xiii) Grant of additional rail warrant to go home or Selected Place of Residence of family to all ranks of armed forces serving in field/ counter insurgency/counter terrorist operational aeas.

(xiv) Rationalisation of scheme for LTC for both officers and Personnel Below Officer Rank (PBORs) and removal of restriction of 1450 kms. for availing All India LTC.

(xv) Grant of High Altitude (Uncongenial Climate) (HAUC) allowance at enhanced rates to troops deployed in more difficult, hazardous isolated areas within the existing HAUC areas.

(xvi) Under the Married Accommodation Project, houses are being built at different Stations to improve the availability of family accommodation.

Shortage of aircrafts in IAF

1720. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there are over 1000 fit and trained IAF pilots doing ground duties because there are not enough aircrafts available with IAF;

(b) if so, what is the present availability of aircrafts and how many aircrafts are required more by IAF to fully utilize the services of 3068 pilots on whom Rs.5000 crore has already been spent in training by Government; and

(c) what are the reasons for delay in purchasing 126 multi-role combat jets by IAF, the sanction for which has already been accorded by Government since the past three years?